DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 435 971 CS 013 748

AUTHOR Dwyer, Edward J.; Flynn, Ann
TITLE Organizing for a Reading/Language Arts Conference.
PUB DATE 1999-11-00
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Conferences; Higher Education; *Language Arts; Models; *Planning; *Professional Development; Program Implementation; *Reading
IDENTIFIERS Professional Concerns

ABSTRACT

College reading/language arts instructors are often involved in local reading associations, often state affiliates of the International Reading Association. Providing support for local councils is a natural area for professional service among college instructors. This paper presents information, ideas, and procedures for organizing a conference, noting that the key to success lies in thoughtful planning and smooth implementation. The paper provides a model organizational checklist, information on preparing a flyer (with a model flyer for conference publicity), and model letters for inservice credit and to presenters. (NKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 435 971

Organizing for a Reading/Language Arts Conference

By

Edward J. Dwyer
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
Box 70684
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN 37614

and
Ann Flynn
Chapter 1 Reading Teacher
Sullivan Elementary School
209 Rosemont Avenue
Kingsport, TN 37660

November, 1999

CS 013 748

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
E. Dwyer
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Organizing for a
Reading/Language Arts Conference

College reading/language arts instructors are often involved in local reading associations, often state affiliates of the International Reading Association. The local councils of the state organizations are fertile ground for presenting exciting and interesting ideas for and with classroom teachers. Providing support for local councils is a natural area for professional service among college reading/language arts instructors. In addition to being an important service, it can be tremendously enjoyable and highly rewarding as well. However, careful planning is essential for successful meetings. Consequently, the information presented herein describes procedures for organizing a conference. The ideas presented have not been gained through marvelous insights and inspiration but, rather, through much experience and more than a few mistakes. The key to success, as in most arenas in life, lies in thoughtful planning and smooth implementation. The models presented are adaptable to a wide variety of circumstances.

Organization: Conference organizers must attend to all the details and share concerns with others well before the conference. Further, even though agreements have been made, it is important determine just before the meeting if everything is prepared according to plans. Organizers of such meetings must, above all else, be prayerfully diligent in awareness of Murphy's Law. A model organizational checklist follows:

Model Organizational Checklist

Organization of Lo-Cal Council Meeting

1. Prepare materials for conference in a portable file box with labeled hanging file folders.
    a. In-service letters, morning and afternoon
        Use different colors
    b. Membership forms file with year and council number printed
    c. Checks and cash envelope
    e. Membership forms that have been filled out.
    f. Prepare membership disk for Pat and Rhonda of the state organization.
2. Hotel reservation for speaker at Bates Motel 939-1133
3. Directions to motel and to campus for presenter.
4. Honorarium for presenter. Give check to Cindy for presentation
5. Registration tables: Be sure to ask people to write clearly on membership forms.
6. Handouts: put in file if there are any (Check with presenter.)
7. Advertising: newspapers, radio, TV, school flyers, graduate and undergraduate students.
8. Process registration forms: Enter on disk for Pat and Rhonda.
9. Send registration funds to state. $6.00 per member.
11. Each member's dues are $3.00 for Lo-Cal Council.
12. Make sure members of Lo-Cal are on state mailing list.
13. Secure rooms 311 - 315 in Our College. Notify Public Safety of need to open doors. Check arrangement of tables and chairs on Friday afternoon.
14. Arrange quick lunch. Big Louie's pizza and drinks. Need refrigerator in copy room for drinks. Get key on Friday from dean's office.

Preparing a Flyer: Keep the flyer simple and the information specific. Distribute the flyer to all schools in the area either through direct mail or visits to schools. E-mail does not seem to be effective. A substantial supply of flyers can be sent to a central administrative office in a school system and central office personnel will gladly put some in each school mail slot. Don't overlook private and parochial schools or other colleges in

the area. Graduate students in classes can also be of substantial help in promoting the conference. A model flyer is presented below:

Model Flyer for Conference Publicity

Notes not in the actual flyer are presented in italics.

Lo-Cal Council of the Worldwide Reading Association

Annual Summer Meeting
27 June 1999
Rooms 311-315 *Our College Hall* (Education Building)
Our University

Registration: 8:00 - 8:30 a.m. at the front door facing the sports arena. Ample free parking is available around the building and at the near-by tennis courts. The meeting will conclude at 2:45 p.m. *Just as $999.95 sounds better than paying $1,000 for something, 2:45 sounds better than 3:00.*

Cost: $15.00 This includes the conference and materials, membership in the Lo-Cal Council and membership in the *Our State* Reading Association (TRA). The *Our State* Reading Association is the state affiliate of the Worldwide Reading Association. Registration includes a pizza lunch and drinks. Letters indicating that participants earned six hours in-service credit will be provided. If you have any questions please call (*phone number*).

Presenters: Ms. Ima Prezenta, *give the school/ agency affiliation of the speaker and the focus of the presentation. This should be no more that one sentence.*

Trouba Dohr, storyteller, singer/songwriter, will entertain and provide ideas for livening up the language arts classroom.

Dr. Sandy Beach, *give affiliation of this speaker and a brief description of the focus of the presentation.*

Please post and share this flyer with your colleagues.

In the actual flyer, of course, use bold lettering, a large type font, and borders to make the flyer attractive. Colored copy paper can be effective, too. It is important, however, to stick to the basic information.

Undergraduate students about to enter the teaching profession are often eager to join professional organizations. State reading associations are excellent in providing interesting opportunities for such students at a

very reasonable cost. Another plus is that undergraduate students like to have professional organizations to which they belong listed on their resumes.

Keep the conference participants together for the entire meeting. It is inconvenient and time consuming in most situations for people to go out for lunch. Further, going out to lunch invariably results in the loss of participants. For example, pizza and soft drinks on the premises can be easily distributed. Count the number of participants in the morning and order one pizza for every three people. Pizza establishments often offer great deals on large orders. Keep the order simple, for example, six pepperoni pizzas, six just cheese, and 10 with vegetables. A large quantity of quality brand soft drinks can be purchased at approximately 25 cents per can at a supermarket or discount department store. The total cost of lunch per participant is likely to be only about $2.00 and highly satisfactory as well. Thus, lunch can be completed and the conference resumed in about 35 minutes. Having lunch at the conference cite and including lunch in the registration cost has a very positive effect on potential participants. This is especially true for out of town people who don't have to be concerned about where to have lunch. Be sure to arrange for rooms to be open for lunch in the building. It works out better if participants have lunch in another room rather than in the conference room.

Press releases to local radio, TV stations, and newspapers yield very limited results although such media outlets are usually receptive to publicizing such events. Invariably, teachers and college students hear about this type of meeting from colleagues. Consequently, distribution of flyers in schools is of paramount importance. Individual flyers can be sent by mail to members of the local organization. Organizers can take advantage of bulk mailing rates provided there are at least 200 flyers. If

there are fewer than 200 members, the list can be padded by adding individual school principals and/or language arts supervisors.

Providing the opportunity for inservice credit is an essential part of conference planning. Give out a letter for the morning sessions and another for the sessions after lunch. Hard as it is to believe, some participants would head for the hills right after lunch if inservice letters for the whole conference were given out after the morning sessions. Copy the morning and afternoon letters on different colored paper to avoid confusion. A model inservice letter is presented below:

Model Inservice Credit Letter

Letterhead of Our College

27 June 1999

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

_____ completed a three hour inservice workshop in the morning of 27 June 1998 at *Our College*. The presenters were 1. Ms. Ima Prezenta, a noted authority on integrating reading skills throughout a literature based reading instruction program 2. Dr. Sandy Beach, a highly regarded researcher and teacher who specializes in literature concerning critical environmental issues and 3. Mr. Trouba Dohr an outstanding singer, songwriter, and storyteller.

This workshop was sponsored by the Lo-Cal Council of the *Our State* Reading Association, an affiliate of the Worldwide Reading Association. Please feel welcome to call or write if further information is required.

Closing

Give the presenter(s) a general description of the plan for the program and, if necessary, suggestions for lodging. Many state reading councils have a list of presenters who will come to a local council meeting for a very reasonable fee. Do not attempt to itemize expenses for the presenter. It is much better to offer an honorarium and have the visiting presenter take care of the expenses. A model letter to a presenter follows:

Model of a Letter to a Presenter

Notes not in the actual letter are presented in italics.

7 June 1999

Ms. Ima Prezenta,
Address etc.
Dear Ms. Prezenta,

Thanks so much for agreeing to come to our annual meeting on 27 June. The program might be something like this:

8:30 Greetings and introductions. Ann Foxx, president of the Lo-Cal Reading Council
8:45 Ima Prezenta, session one.
9:40 Break
9:50 Ima Prezenta, session two.
10:50 Break
11:00 Ima Prezenta, session three.
11:45 Break (short stretch break).
11:50 Storyteller/songwriter Trouba Dohr
12:25 Lunch in the building (pizza & drinks)
1:00 Environmental literature expert, Dr. Sandy Beach
2:10 Close out with Ann Foxx

Ms. Prezenta, you certainly are welcome to make any arrangements concerning scheduling. For example, you might rather have only one break rather than two. We have a large room with tables so "cut and paste options" are available. We expect about 80 participants. The majority are likely to be elementary teachers in grades kindergarten through four. Nearly all will be in regular classrooms with the possibility of some special education students during inclusion time periods. *It is very important to carefully describe the audience for the presenter and the setting.*

There is a lot of emphasis in our local communities concerning phonics and the basics. Consequently, we want to encourage enhancing skills while providing a literature based language arts environment.

There is a reservation for you (confirmation *number ... .*) at the Bates Motel (*phone number*) on Cedar Road. Directions: *Provide very precise directions. If need be, drive the route the presenter will be advised to take when he or she leaves the major road and record the distances and all the turns accurately.*

Please take care of the bill at the Bates Motel when you check in or out. We will present you with a check for $500.00 at the conference. This will include all expenses and the honorarium. However, you are certainly welcome to make whatever arrangements you wish. The Bates is the most convenient location and has a discount rate for guests of *Our College* which is quite reasonable.

Very carefully describe the route from the motel to the meeting site. Nothing contributes more anxiety to a presenter than wondering if he or she will find the location.

Ms. Prezenta, Ann Foxx and/or I can meet you at the motel in the morning and help you get set up. If you would like, we can set things up on Friday evening, 26 June. Please call (H *phone number*) (W *phone number*) if you need anything.

Closing, etc.

The rewards and learning experiences generated through organizing a reading/language arts meeting make it an expenditure of time and energy of the most satisfying kind. Teachers get to meet teachers they have not met before and renew friendships with colleagues they might not have seen for a long time. The conference can be a very pleasant social experience as well as a positive professional experience. Further, organizing a conference with area teachers and students provides contacts for supporting graduate programs.

If you have not yet become active in organizing a local reading/language arts conference "go for it". College students, especially graduate students, will prove to be very helpful and will also enjoy the leadership opportunities.